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September 14, 2007

L. Preston Bryant, Jr.
Office of the Secretary of Natural Resources
Patrick Henry Building
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Secretary Bryant:

I consider myself a sludge victim. I had my initial exposure in August 2001 which resulted in an immediate virulent Mycoplasma pneumonia and lung infection. It took a 5 day hospital stay, 4 months, and 8 courses of antibiotics, to force the infections into remission. I have never gotten rid of these infections and since that initial exposure my overall health has steadily deteriorated resulting in numerous chronic illnesses.

Unfortunately, my health does not allow me to appear at the meeting on September 18, 2007. I will be undergoing medical treatment at this time. I would however like to register my objection to the list of panelists for the "Expert Panel Studying Biosolids."

Often an agency or industry is forced to name a "Panel of Experts" to appease an unhappy public. While authorities reluctantly "agree" to the concept of "study," they carefully control it by stacking the panel with members who will eventually reach predetermined conclusions which they hope will quiet the public. The sludge industry has engaged in this maneuvering numerous times before (Stakeholders Research, Sludge Summit.) None of these carefully planned events have succeeded before. This new study panel has all the ear markings of the past fiascos

In general the current panel list is stacked heavily with state government representatives whose jobs depend on their defense of the sludge program and/or representatives from institutions that depend on the sludge industry for their functioning. In other words far too many panelists have financial ties to the sludge industry. Why aren't there more people who have had their lives shattered by this program on the panel? They are certainly expert on sludge and its effects. Why do I only see one member (out of about 27) who does not directly or indirectly have their job connected to sludge money, represented on this panel?

Because of the grossly unbalanced nature of the "members," one must conclude this is by no means an unbiased panel objectively looking at the sewage sludge issue. Instead, it is a carefully planned and controlled response which will whitewash the issue and claim there is no foundation to the scores of valid complaints that have plagued the ill founded sludge program in Virginia

In further attempt to control all data, I am told the many "citizen representatives" who were

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carefully excluded from the "panel" may not even be able to speak at these meetings. If they are allowed to speak they will need to severely limit their input. This unfair control assures that the citizens real concerns and issues will never be considered at these staged meetings.

The first of a number of examples of people who raise grave concerns on this panel is Dr. Alan B. Rubin (no relation to me.) Dr. Rubin has recently retired from the EPA where he was one of the original developers and promoters of the sludge program. He was instrumental in "pushing through" the 1992 Sludge Rule which had failed the peer-review process of the EPA's own research department. Dr. Rubin's entire professional career has been dependant on implementation and continuation of the 503 Sludge Rule. He is currently employed as a consultant, reaping huge financial rewards from the sludge industry. To include Dr. Rubin as "Citizen Representative" of the people of Virginia is outrageous. His position of biased, unquestioning support of sludge is already represented by almost all of the other members.

Virginia Tech has had a long close working relation with the VDH/DEQ in forcing the unwanted Sludge program on counties all over Virginia. In particular Dr. Greg Evanylo has traveled all over the state participating in the state/industry sponsored "staged "meetings" in which they blanket new areas, which are fighting inclusion in the sludge program, with untrue propaganda. Even though much of the propaganda has been proven factually false, it is still repeated by these faithful promoters of sludge.

Chris Peot from the Blue Plains, Sewage Sludge Treatment Plant is another member of the group that can hardly be seen as unbiased. He is a manager of a sewage sludge plant that supplies much of Virginia's sewage sludge. Not only would his position eliminate him from an "unbiased panel" but he too travels around the country in staged "meetings" preaching that sewage sludge is the best thing since sliced bread. Add to this the fact that Mr. Peot has testified for the sludge industry at a wrongful death case, we begin to see how this so called "unbiased panel" is predestined to endorse a very dangerous and harmful program because it is stacked with "pro-sludge" individuals.

I would hope this panel is not in its final form. It needs to be substantially adjusted to be more balanced and therefore more credible to the citizens of Virginia. If it is not, the intended appeasement of citizen concerns will never be attained.

Sincerely,

Barbara L. Rubin
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